

*Inside Report:
Training For
Deployment In*

BOSNIA

By MSG William Bushue

In November 1995, I was provided the unique opportunity to be part of the Combined Arms Assessment Team deployed out of the Center for Army Lessons Learned at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. Our mission was to gather relevant lessons learned in support of Task Force Eagle and the Total Army. It was my privilege to be the guest of the 1st Armored Div; observing their operation was an exceptional education I feel obligated to share with all noncommissioned officers.

The team consisted of 37 soldiers deploying from installations throughout the continental United States. We departed home station and journeyed to Ft. Benning, GA, the Individual Deployment Site (IDS) for all replacement soldiers going to the Bosnia-Herzegovina theater. The personnel there attend to the administrative and equipment needs of every soldier.

Our trip to Bosnia was routed through a week of situational lane training at Hoehenfels, Germany. The predeployment exercises there are well-researched and very reflective of the Bosnia-Herzegovina area of operations, with an emphasis on performance-oriented training dedicated to saving soldiers' lives.

The soldier's ability to mentally assess his skills and physically execute the expected tasks were the winning factors in this deployment. Soldiers in the maneuver and support units found they performed the same basic tasks on the Mission Essential Task List as they did during predeployment training. In Bosnia, the METL was done well. Confidence and performance were both high. By capturing the embodiment of the current tactical and operational environment, the exacting standards of crew drills increased the levels of confidence



Photos by Joint Combat Camera

and performance as soon as soldiers realized they were prepared for this mission. Developing a quality scenario for redeployment training increased unit effectiveness and enhanced the soldiers' confidence in their ability to fight and win. Any unit would do well to emulate these training results.

Concern about cold weather injuries was an additional factor in this mission. Soldiers deployed with the required cold weather gear and trained properly in its use prior to deployment. This was evidenced by the continually low percentage of cold weather injuries for such a high percentage of soldiers exposed to the elements on a daily basis. Cold weather environments can be mentally as well as physically limiting. Recognizing this, the units trained prior to deployment with the latest cold weather systems and thus enhanced the soldiers' confidence. This alleviated concerns that could have hampered daily duties in such an austere environment. NCOs were visible and involved themselves consistently in not only the physical but the mental preparation of daily task performance, as well.

In my conversations with numerous NCOs, I took note of suggestions on how the Noncommissioned Officer Education System can do a better job supporting the peacekeeping missions. Many times the suggestions centered around public relations and checkpoint operations. NCOs in Bosnia said positive media relations and checkpoint operations don't have to be skills learned at the last minute. It would be a tremendous asset to commanders if our NCOES could teach common task versions of these two skills that needed only refinement prior to deployment. This would allow replacement NCOs to quickly integrate into unit operations without relying on familiarization and on-the-job training.

By emphasizing fire and maneuver training, there is a tendency for a soldier's basic field skills to atrophy. Two

areas of concern are field sanitation and field fortification. The majority of units I observed were aware of mistakes they'd made while training at home station. As a result, they deployed with good field techniques. In organizations that failed to attain a sufficient level of sustainment facilities within a reasonable amount of time, soldiers compensated with substitute methods that may or may not conform to accepted standards. These are the areas that will challenge NCOs during a protracted period of sustainment.

The leadership I saw in Bosnia is, by anyone's standard, an example of the hard work and dedicated professionalism we have all come to expect. The pride in performance demonstra-

ted by the NCO Corps is mirrored daily in the faces of the soldiers they lead. ■

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